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Housekeepers' Chat

Wednesday, February 20, 1929.

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

Subject: "A Rest Corner in the Kitchen." From Bureau of Home Economics,
U. S. D. A. Bulletin available: "Convenient Kitchens."

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"You look as if you carried the troubles of the world on your shoulders" said Uncle Ebenezer, when he came home from work last night. "What's happened to your cheerful disposition?"

"Listen to this," I said. "'The average homemaker spends 70% of her time in her kitchen, does three acres of dishes, and carries 20 tons of water in a year, if she does not have running water.'"

"Who says so?"

"The State Home Management Specialist, of Massachusetts. Surveys in Massachusetts homes showed that homemakers are walking from $2\frac{1}{2}$ to 11 miles daily in their kitchens alone. One woman carried water for 30 years, and then found it cost only \$8.00 to have running water. Thirty years, of back-breaking work! That's a tragedy, Uncle Ebenezer!"

"Yes," said Uncle Ebenezer, "it is." But you can't do anything about it. Are we having something good for dinner?"

"I haven't started it yet. I got to thinking about the woman who carried water for 30 years, and how tired she must have been all the time. I hope the State Home Management Specialist told her how to make over her kitchen, after the running water was installed. And I hope she has a rest corner in the room, with a nice comfortable chair, where she can drop down for an occasional rest. She might have a small table or shelf, for her mending basket, and her favorite books. I'd put this rest corner near a sunny window, and have a nice cheerful maidenhair fern growing nearby. And a red geranium. And pretty gingham curtains, and --"

"Aunt Sammy," said Uncle Ebenezer, "I hate to interrupt your interior decorating, but I am hungry. Is there anything I can do to further dinner? I'll even cook, if you'll let me scramble some eggs."

Seeing that there was nothing else to do, I put on my apron, and we got dinner.

I'll tell you what we had, in a few minutes. I'm still thinking about the old-fashioned, inefficient kitchens, in which so many homemakers spend more than half their time.

Have you an old kitchen, that seems hopeless? Let's look it over, and see if something can't be done, to improve it.

First, is your kitchen used for the preparation and serving of food, or is it a combination kitchen, laundry, wash room, and dining room? The most convenient kitchen is one in which the necessary work can be done with the least possible effort. The kitchen is above all else, a place to prepare and serve food. Limit it to this use if possible, and arrange for laundering and such work to be done in another place. Many old kitchens are large enough to make two rooms. If you are building or remodeling a kitchen, make it oblong, and with no more floor space, than is actually needed. You pay for space, in miles of extra steps.

Next, let's take a look around at the walls and woodwork. Are they dark and gloomy, or light and cheery? Pleasant colors to live with are ivory, tan, light yellow, and warm gray. A nice finish for walls and woodwork is a good quality of washable paint.

Now glance at the floor. Is it smooth, or rough and splintery? The kitchen floor needs a durable finish, or covering, that grease and water will not affect. If the floor is smooth, and without cracks, a paint that does not show tracks, may be used. If the floor is rough, perhaps the best thing to do is to make it smooth, and cover it with linoleum. Linoleum is easy to clean, and comfortable to stand and walk on.

Doors and windows are next. Are they well-placed? A door that swings both ways, between the kitchen and the dining room, or between the kitchen and the pantry, is convenient.

Broad, short windows, placed about 3-1/2 feet above the floor, are probably the best type for most kitchens.

And don't forget to plan for good lighting. Place your electric light fixtures, or your lamp, so that the light will fall on your work table, sink, and stove. In many kitchens, lights are hung from the middle of the ceiling, and the housewife must stand in her own shadow while she works. Sometimes dark, dreary kitchens can be transformed into cheerful workrooms by cutting an additional window, by putting a glass panel in the outside door, or even by painting walls and woodwork a light color.

Now we are ready to consider the equipment that we need, in carrying out the two main kitchen operations: first, preparation, cooking, and serving of food; second, removing food from the dining table, washing the dishes, and putting them away. Kitchen equipment should be carefully grouped, to save steps. For instance, sink, stove, and worktable, should be near together. Scattered equipment means walking many unnecessary miles, during the year. If the kitchen table is on casters, it can be easily moved where needed, thus saving steps.

Another thing we need in our workshop is plenty of well-planned cupboard and shelf space, for storing utensils, and food supplies. Steps can be saved, by grouping similar things, and placing them near the part of the room

where they will be used. For instance, keep mixing bowls and spoons, and such dry materials as flour and sugar, near each other, if possible.

And don't forget a rest corner. Find room for a comfortable chair, and a small table or shelf, for books or mending basket.

Now, my story is done, so far as today's subject is concerned. There is a great deal more to say about kitchens, how to make them efficient and pleasant workshops. If you are planning to build a new kitchen, or make over an old one, I shall be glad to send you a book of plans. Even the worst of old kitchens can be made over, in some fashion,

I said I'd tell you what we had for dinner: Scrambled Eggs and Dried Beef Hash-Browned Potatoes; Pop-overs; Orange and Date Salad; and Crackers.

Uncle Ebenezer prepared the scrambled eggs and dried beef, and for a wonder, he didn't let the eggs burn. He also prepared the Hash-Browned Potatoes, and they were excellent. This is the recipe he used -- six ingredients, for Hash-Browned Potatoes:

4 medium sized potatoes	1/4 cup hot water
2 tablespoons onion, chopped fine	3/4 teaspoon salt, or to taste
2 tablespoons butter	and 1/8 teaspoon pepper, or to taste
Six ingredients: (repeat)	

Cook the potatoes in their skins until tender. Remove the skins. Chop the potato very fine, with the seasonings. Melt the butter in a smooth skillet, and add the water. Put in the potatoes, in a thin even layer, and cook over a low flame until golden brown. Fold the potato over like an omelet, and then turn onto a hot platter. Garnish with parsley.

Uncle Ebenezer forgot the parsley; he was too hungry to think about garnishes last night.

I made the pop-overs, using the recipe on page 51 of the radio cookbook. It is the most satisfactory recipe for pop-overs I've ever found.

What else did we have? Oh yes, the Orange and Date Salad. That was easy -- sometimes I stuff the dates with cream cheese, but I didn't bother to do that yesterday.

Let's check the menu: Scrambled Eggs and Dried Beef: Hash-Browned Potatoes; Pop-overs; Orange and Date Salad; and Crackers.

Tomorrow: "Learn to Read the Label."

